**The Psalms Of Advent:**

**Who Shall Ascend**

**The Hill Of The Lord?**

**Psalm 24**

Advent 1 – Midweek

12.01.2021

Our text for meditation is a portion of the Psalm we read responsively earlier...

 *Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.* So far the text:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Interesting question raised in this text that serves as the title for this sermon, Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? What is this hill? Where does it go? What is so special about it?

This hill is none other than that described in the second half of the verse, “And who shall stand in His holy place?” It is the place where the glory of the Lord God Almighty dwells.

Who shall ascend this hill? Who shall ascend to heaven? Who shall stand with God in His most high place? What kind of a person shall dwell on Mount Zion? What does it take to get there?

That person is also described in this Psalm. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

I’d say that is a tall order. Do you remember Pontius Pilate? He tried to declare himself innocent of crucifying Jesus. He washed his hands and told the people that Christ’s blood was on their heads, not on his hands. Who was he fooling? If he would not have given the order, the soldiers would not have taken Jesus to the cross.

Who here, sitting now in the pews today, has hands that are clean from sin? And in case you are not sure how that is defined, our text connects clean hands to a pure heart. Whose heart is pure? There is no lust in it. Hatred does not abide there. Forgiveness is free-flowing to everyone and in all situations. Plots to get even are never harbored in the pure heart. The pure heart never thinks itself better than others. A pure heart always looks for the good in all people, even those whom everybody else looks down upon.

Further, the pure heart is defined as the one who does not life up his soul to what is false nor swears deceitfully. That would mean that God’s Word, and all the things contained therein, have never been doubted. Worldly ideas which are contrary to God’s word are always avoided. What is more, a pure heart would never lie, it would never attempt to deceive another or hide truth.

So, who here is going to ascend the hill of the Lord? Who here has clean hands? Which of you has a pure heart? Who has never been led astray by falsehood? How many here can claim that not even once have they told a lie?

Dear friends, if there is such a one here, it ain’t me. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

I have heard newborn children described as pure of heart, that only children have hands that are clean and hearts that are pure. Personally, I cannot remember that far back in my own life, but I remember the lives of my two sons. I know of no such time in their lives when they were without sin. Some might claim, “when they were infants.” But that would be in direct contradiction of God’s word, for that word instructs us that my sons – and all people – were born in sin and conceived in iniquity.

There is one Child though, who does fit that description. There is one Child who was conceived not by the will of man, but by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. One Child came forth from a virgin’s womb with a pure heart and kept it so all His days. He was never led astray by falsehood, though we know that Satan tempted Him sorely. Not once did He attempt to deceive.

In innocence and blessedness, that Child grew in years, till He ascended the hill of the Lord, bearing the cross upon which He would give His own life. There, upon the cross, that grown man, God’s Christ, brought glory to God’s name as He was nailed to the cursed tree.

In anguish, he was despised and rejected by men. Acquainted with sorrow, His heart knew grief as He gazed upon those who rejected and sentenced Him to death. Even in that, there was still no hatred or evil in that noble breast. On that holy hill, often called Golgotha, Jesus earned the blessing of His Father for the sacrifice He made of His own life.

He made that sacrifice to cleanse the hands of the filthy and to purify the hearts of the transgressors. Christ’s soul was lifted up upon the cross to bring back to Himself those who followed falsehood. He pledged forgiveness to those who dealt deceitfully, even with Him.

Dear friends, this Psalm is first about Christ. It is a vivid description of the Word made flesh. But it is more. It is also a description of you. Have you not, through the waters of baptism been united to Christ – to His death and to His resurrection? You have been changed. You now live a new life in Christ.

In a Word, you have been cleansed of your sin.

In a precious meal, you receive forgiveness, salvation, and a new life – Christ’s life.

Your hands have been cleansed – your heart purified. What is false has been purged from your soul, and your deceit is absolved. You receive blessing from the Lord. You are given righteousness from the God of your salvation.

You gather here for a purpose, to seek the face of the God of Jacob. It is the face of the Babe of Bethlehem, beaten and battered and crowned with thorns, that you might receive honor and glory.

It is your God who desires to give to you mercy and blessings and glory. Mighty in battle, He has made you able to stand in his holy place.

Come, receive the good gifts that God would give you in Word and meal.

Come, ascend the hill of the Lord.

Come, enter Zion. Now and forever more. In Christ! Amen.